

Social Questions

BULLETIN

of the Methodist Federation for Social Service (unofficial), an organization which rejects the method of the struggle for profit as the economic base for society; which seeks to replace it with social-economic planning in order to develop a society without class distinctions and privileges.

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Negro Methodists and Their Problems

The Methodist Church has approximately 8,000,000 members of which 325,000 are Negroes—probably the largest affiliated group of white and Negro Christians in the world. Definite challenges arise out of the inter-racial character of the Church's membership. If the Church would grapple with this problem of race, new vitality might come to its organization.

CRITERIA FOR LEADERSHIP

The plan of union of the Methodist Church provides for jurisdictional conferences. White Annual Conferences are divided into five geographical areas. Negro Annual Conferences, however, are all placed alone in one jurisdictional conference known as the Central. Certainly the vast majority of Negroes hope and pray that isolation may not be their lot. In civil life isolation or segregation makes for suspicion and selfish ideals on the part of all concerned. Fear is added to this and widens the breach. Such a situation results in various forms of anti-social behavior and causes many evils. It makes for a less rich life for the community in general. Any artificial barrier in the Church, therefore, which prevents a common understanding of aims and objectives or hinders a free flow of ideas and ideals will produce in the Church provincialism and sectionalism. Nothing can be more deadening.

The Negroes hope, however, that new ideas, vital personalities and inspiring fellowship in the new Church may cut across jurisdictional lines. If this does not happen, we shall have six sectional churches built on a motive other than that of being a world-wide Church with the idea of bringing in the kingdom of brotherhood and God.

Since the Central Jurisdiction is here, what should be some of the criteria for its leadership? First, knowledge of Negro life—its history, traditions, problems and longings—would naturally suggest itself as one of the essentials of leadership. That anyone who did not have a thorough knowledge of the life of a group and sympathy for it should aspire to become a leader of that group seems incongruous.

Second, knowledge of the scene in which the American Negro lives is important. There are many invisible lines in this American scene. There are many frontiers in the field of race relations. Certainly it would seem wise to

choose men and women who desire to press these frontiers and to extend them.

Third, the ability to lead should have been demonstrated. Does it make sense to elevate to places of leadership men and women who have not succeeded in their present fields while others of proven worth are denied the opportunity of serving in important positions? There are today numberless pastors, district superintendents and laymen who, by their knowledge and love of Negro life and their devotion to the needs of the people, are carrying on in heroic fashion in small areas. If these persons could be put in places of leadership, the Central Jurisdiction would profit thereby.

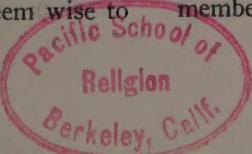
Fourth, no man with dictator tendencies should be elevated to a place of leadership in a time like this. A leader should know and have respect for the consultative technique. A leader, by talking with church members, Sunday School superintendents, trustees, pastors and district superintendents to ascertain the will of the group, would advance the Central Jurisdiction immeasurably since the judgment of any group is superior to that of any one man in the group. This technique develops creative thinking and acting.

Fifth, the ability to learn should be one of the criteria for the leaders in the new Central Jurisdiction. Willingness to learn and ability to learn are important. No one who is so self-sufficient as to feel that in himself he knows all the answers is worthy of a place of leadership. Jesus said, "I come to you as one who serves." It is in this spirit that the new leaders of the Central Jurisdiction should attack their great and challenging task.

IS THE CHURCH CHRISTIAN?

The music director of a Southern school for Negro youth was invited to a service at the First Church in the city where the school is located. An original composition of this musician was to be sung by the choir that morning. The composer invited several students to go with him. On entering the church they were invited to sit in the gallery. This raised the question in the young people's minds, "Is the church Christian?"

Negro church members, planning to attend meetings of sectional or national committees on which they have been appointed by the church, receive notices which read, "You will make your own hotel reservations." This means that the convener of the committee is dodging the responsibility that comes to him because of the inter-racial character of the group. As a consequence, Negro members must stay miles away from the place of meeting.



They must scurry around to get lunch when the adjournment period presupposes that everyone can secure lunch in a nearby place. How Christian is it for an inter-racial church committee to naïvely announce that certain committee members are having lunch at a place where Negroes are not served?

WHAT HAPPENS UNDER SEGREGATION?

"In North Carolina there are many colleges for white and Negro students. To get to and from school many of these students use the buses. Enroute to school last year I boarded a bus on which were many students. The other Negro students and I occupied the last three seats in the rear. As we went along more and more white students got on the bus until there was not enough room for them to be seated. The driver asked all the Negro students to sit on the last seat. This was impossible.

"The driver then asked some of these (Negro) students to get off and wait for the next bus. However embarrassing it was to be forced to leave, it would have been much more so to have remained. We all got off together. How could these white students who were pursuing an education and the good life sit there and see this happen?"

"One day when I was in a store I saw two water fountains much alike and yet different. I could not quite understand it. Over each of the fountains was a sign, one 'white', the other 'colored'. Being literal-minded, I was curious to investigate this 'new fangled' water. Having heard only of colorless water I was anxious to see colored water. I decided to test the veracity of the signs by seeing this water with my own eyes.

"When turned on, the fountains produced identical streams of water—color and everything. When I finished drinking some of the 'white' water I discovered that the water was not nearly as icy as the stares given me by the white people who had gathered around. One person asked, 'Can't you read?'"

"Upon entering a street car one cold day, when I was about sixteen, I paid my fare and took a seat in the back. Although I had not taken the last seat in the car, I felt justified in sitting where I did because there were only three other passengers. At the next stop a drunken white man got on. On seeing me sitting two seats from the rear, he blurted out, 'Get up you little N—— gal, and let me sit down.' I ignored him until he threatened to strike me.

"Upon hearing the noise the conductor stopped the car and inquired as to the cause of it. I reported to him what had happened, while the drunken man stood by muttering profusely. The conductor glanced sympathetically in his direction, then eyeing me coldly, he retorted, 'If you'd been sittin' where you and your folks belong to sit at, he wouldn't've had to say nothing to you. Now get on back there so this sick man can set down.'

IS UNDERSTANDING POSSIBLE?

"One day while I (a white child) was playing with some children our washer-woman brought home the clothes. I was very fond of her and, in speaking of her to the children, I called her a lady. One child ran and told my mother. My mother immediately came to say that you never call a colored woman a lady. Although

I was only four years of age, I still thought the laundress was a lady."

"When I (a white student) came to Winston-Salem to take a business course it was necessary for me to work somewhere for my board and room. The people at the school which I attended secured for me a job helping out in a boarding house, waiting on tables and helping clean house. I also helped prepare the vegetables for cooking.

"I had never been in a town as large as Winston-Salem nor in a boarding house before. My experience at serving meals had been gained by helping serve my family on a farm in the mountains.

"The problems were many in my dealing with the 'sophisticated' city folk. Had it not been for the kindness of the cook, Sally, an intelligent Negro woman who taught me many things that I probably never would have otherwise learned, all would have been lost."

"One night after a variety show at my high school in Connecticut, a group composed of three Negro girls and myself (a Negro student) went to a newly-opened ice cream parlor. Many of my white classmates went along also. We went in and found seats. That we were not waited upon immediately did not seem strange, as there were many people in the place, but after they were served more white people came in and were served also. This made us wonder. Then, one of my white girl friends called the clerk's attention to the fact that she came in after we did and had been served. He ignored her remarks. Again she spoke to him. His reply was, 'too busy'. Finally, after many inquiries, he said that if we would come to the other side and stand up he would wait on us.

"This caused one of the most startling reactions imaginable. All the students in the place, those who were served and those who were not, began protesting and threatening to leave. The manager thought they were joking. He soon found out that they were not. Those who had been served paid their bills and along with the others began to leave the place. Then the manager reconsidered, thinking of the business he was losing. He called all of us back, apologized with the alibi that that was the policy of the company, the headquarters of which was located in Virginia. Strangely enough, since that time the policy has changed. Now every one is served alike at 'Crystal Cone'."

FEDERAL LEGISLATION

CIVIL RIGHTS

Proposed Civil Rights Act (H.R. 8896). "To provide for the enjoyment by all persons (regardless of race, creed or color) of the facilities of places of public accommodation or of public conveyance in the District of Columbia." This includes all public eating places, hotels, theaters, and places of amusement, auditoriums and concert halls, stores, trains, cars and taxicabs.

HOSPITALS

Proposed National Hospital Act of 1940 (S.3230). Proposes to build hospitals for rural and economically depressed areas which shall be available to all groups in the community, and to train personnel to man these institutions.

"What are the needs of Negro people to whom this bill could administer? There is one hospital bed available for every 2,000 Negroes in this country, as compared with one bed for every 150 of the white population. . . . These beds available to Negroes are located in about 120 hospitals. . . . Where hospitals are available to colored people, it is usually as separate institutions or segregated divisions of the municipal system.

"Sometimes these segregated institutions are conducted in connection with a medical school, but where this occurs, the school is usually for white students, and in such instances the hospital staff is approved by the school or university. Where this arrangement occurs, many Negroes feel, rather naturally, that the chief concern of the hospital is training for white medical students rather than hospital service for colored patients. Instances of pre-natal examinations by the student clinic, described as indelicate and humiliating experiences, give some warrant to the charge." (Trevor Bowen in *Divine White Right*, page 199, A Study Made by the Institute of Social and Religious Research.)

"Because the southern states are largely rural and because, taken as a whole, they are poorer than most other sections of our country, they have fewer physicians in proportion to population. . . . In the southern states, there is one physician to every 1,000 people, as compared with nearly 750 for the United States as a whole, and about 600 for some of the wealthier states. But in southern communities with less than 5,000 people, there are about 1,500 people to one physician, and in rural areas where the population is largely Negro, the supply of physicians is still lower." (Michael Davis, Chairman of Committee on Research in Medical Economics, New York City, in *Journal of Negro Education*, July, 1937, page 442.)

HOUSING

The Wagner-Steagall Housing Act. Provides finances for construction of low-rent slum clearance housing projects. At least twenty local and state authorities have included Negroes in their membership because they wish to serve adequately Negro citizens as well as white citizens, and they feel that to do so they need constantly the knowledge and experience of a Negro person in their deliberation.

In order that additional housing projects may be erected for low income Negro families, it is imperative that the U. S. House of Representatives enact Senate Bill 591. (See page 4 of this issue of the SOCIAL QUESTIONS BULLETIN as to what you can do.)

PUBLIC WORKS

The Public Works Administration. Created to provide work for thousands of unemployed and at the same time to provide all the citizens with improved facilities. Here, as in the Housing Act, the law itself sets up a cooperative relation between the federal government and the local group. Many Negro people have been employed on these projects, and many of the facilities so built have been destined for our Negro people, and yet the law does not work automatically. It needs, besides wise administrators, an alert public.

To illustrate, we quote one case: "In 1936 a large city applied to the Public Works Administration for \$70,000

to aid in the construction of an addition to the main city hospital. This addition was to be a service building. Immediately thereafter, a group of Negro citizens met with the mayor and requested that some consideration be given to the increased hospital needs of Negro citizens.

"As a result of this conference the proper city officials amended their application to PWA and requested \$80,000 more for the purpose of providing more hospital space for Negro patients and facilities for the training of Negro nurses and internes. The final request was for \$150,000. This amended application was approved and the hospital addition was built.

"The building was completed early in 1938, but up to November, 1938, no Negro internes had been appointed, and Negro girls were not allowed to register in the nurses' training school. Further, it looked as though the officials were not interested in doing anything about it. A group of white and Negro women, members of the inter-racial committee of the Y.W.C.A., joined hands in a concerted effort to require the city officials to live up to their obligation. Outstanding men of both races joined in the controversy and enlisted the aid of the press. When it seemed as though very little progress was being made, these various civic organizations appealed directly to the PWA administrator. After numerous conferences, both in Washington and the city in question, and exchanges of correspondence, the matter was finally settled, and provision was made for the training of Negro nurses and internes.

"This is an important instance of how effective local groups can be in bringing such matters to the attention of the proper authorities in order that the obligations between the local authorities and federal agencies will be carried out. At present a Negro interne has been appointed to this hospital and young Negro girls will be admitted to the nurses' training school next semester." (Public Affairs News Service Bulletin No. III, Series No. 4, Women's Press, New York City.)

ANTI-LYNCHING

Proposed Federal Anti-Lynching Bill. Confronted with the fact that over 5,000 lynchings have taken place in the United States since 1882, socially-minded American legislators have tried repeatedly to enact federal anti-lynching legislation. The latest Bill, S-845, has already passed the House of Representatives and is now waiting for Senate action. According to the provisions of the Bill, where officers are proved to have either neglected their duty to protect the prisoner from lynching or to have refused to do it, the governmental unit is liable to the relatives of the person lynched for not less than \$2,000 or more than \$10,000.

This proposed relatively mild punishment of the crime of lynching is being bitterly opposed by certain Senators who are now threatening to conduct a filibuster in the Senate to prevent a vote upon the Bill.

Federation members. Wire or write immediately to your Senators requesting them to vote for the Anti-Lynching Bill, and, if necessary, for cloture!

(The material for this article was furnished by Negro Methodists including David D. Jones, President of Bennett College.)

Conference Actions

While attending the Washington, Delaware, Troy and New York Annual Conferences during March and April, Charles C. Webber drafted the following resolutions for our Federation members on the Anti-Lynching and Federal Housing Bills and the WPA, and a memorial to the 1940 General Conference relative to Social Planning:

ANTI-LYNCHING BILL

Whereas, "In the seven years, 1933-1939, there have been 102 lynchings, an average of better than one a month"; and

Whereas, "In 99.2% of the lynchings nothing has been done to apprehend or punish lynchers";

Be It Resolved, by the members of the Conference of the Methodist Church, That we call upon the Senators of the United States to vote for the Anti-Lynching Bill, and if it becomes evident that a filibuster against the Bill in the Senate can be broken only by a cloture, to vote for a cloture. (Adopted by the New York, Washington, Delaware and Troy Annual Conferences.)

PUBLIC HOUSING

Whereas, Housing conditions for Negroes in the United States are so bad that they endanger seriously the health and morals of the American people; and

Whereas, The funds made available to the United States Housing Authority for slum-clearance and low-rent housing projects have all been earmarked (Nearly 8,000 low-income Negro families are already housed in Government-aided projects.);

Be It Resolved, by the Conference of the Methodist Church, That we call upon the House of Representatives of the United States to enact Senate Bill 591, which would authorize the United States Housing Authority to issue its bonds for \$800,000,000. "The proceeds of these bonds would be available for loans of not more than 90% of the cost of projects undertaken by local public housing agencies."

Substantially adopted by the Washington and Delaware Conferences.

Federation members, write to your Congressman to vote for Senate Bill 591!

WPA

Whereas, It is reported that hundreds of thousands of WPA workers are to be cut from the rolls by July 1st and hundreds of thousands more during July, August and September—cuts which will result in great suffering;

Be It Resolved, That the Conference of the Methodist Church call upon Congress and the President of the United States to appropriate \$86,000,000 to the WPA for the rest of this fiscal year, and \$1,500,000,000 for the next fiscal year (July 1, 1940-June 30, 1941).

Substantially adopted by the Washington, Delaware and New York Conferences.

Federation members, write immediately to your Senators and Congressmen requesting a \$1,500,000 WPA appropriation for 1940-1941!

SOCIAL PLANNING

A memorial to the General Conference adopted by the Troy Conference of the Methodist Church.

Whereas, The Social Creed of the former Methodist Episcopal Church, South, as found in the 1938 Discipline has the statement: "The Churches should stand for social planning and control of the credit and monetary systems and the economic processes for the common good";

Be It Resolved, That the Troy Conference memorialize the General Conference of 1940 to add to the Social Creed of the Methodist Church, paragraph 1695, of the 1939 Discipline, the statement:

"The Methodist Church stands for social planning and democratic control of the economic processes for the common good."

No Arbitration

While in Washington, D. C., in March Charles C. Webber tested the report that "The Dining Room, Inc." which is operated under a lease in the Methodist Building drew the color line; and that it was refusing to submit its controversy with its employees, organized into the United Cafeteria Workers' Union, to arbitration. He found that the report was essentially true in regard to both issues. Our Washington Federation Unit is taking action.

Traveling Seminar

Charles C. Webber will be the Director of the Fifth Annual Southern Traveling Economic Seminar of the Religion and Labor Foundation, July 2nd to 31st.

The Seminar gives ministers, teachers, labor organizers and social workers an opportunity to make a first-hand study of the social, labor, economic and racial problems of the South. After a four-day visit to Washington, where the group will confer with outstanding leaders of government, labor, and the cooperatives, the Seminar will proceed to Harlan County, Ky., the entire TVA and the Deep South. Special emphasis will be given to the sharecropper problem. The closing two days will be spent at the Delta Cooperative Farm at Rochdale, Miss.

The Seminar will be sponsored by labor and religious groups, including the M.F.S.S.

The registration fee is \$15.00. The total cost is estimated at \$115.00 to \$140.00. Address Willard Uphaus, R.L.F. Executive Secretary, 106 Carmel St., New Haven, Conn., for complete information. See the South!

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